# Lagging Seconds

written by

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1 INT. KITCHEN - MORNING (8:00 A.M.)

Sunlight cuts across a small, tidy kitchen in sharp, clinical angles. Everything is arranged with deliberate intent; every object seems to have sworn an oath to stay in its place.

**THOMAS** prepares breakfast with quiet, surgical precision. He measures oat milk into a bowl of muesli. Drops two slices of bread into the toaster.

**CLICK.** The sound echoes in the heavy stillness.

He sits. Scrolls through headlines—not reading, just flicking, watching the rhythmic blur of text.

The toaster **DINGS**. Thomas rises. He spreads a thin, perfectly even layer of marmalade onto his toast. Every movement is exact. Controlled.

He eats slowly, his eyes wandering to the window. Outside, a neighbor fumbles with their keys, rushing to a car. Thomas watches, motionless. A witness to the friction of the world, yet untouched by it.

Perfect, empty order.

THOMAS (V.O.)
The small things keep you sane. A sunrise. A crisp piece of toast. They keep the chaos outside.

CUT TO:

2 INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Thomas stands at the sink in his morning uniform: faded boxers and an old T-shirt. The air is heavy; the mirror is a wall of opaque white fog from the shower.

He turns on the tap. A steady, predictable flow.

He applies toothpaste—a measured, perfect ribbon. He brushes with a mechanical rhythm. Unbroken. Systematic.

He spits. Rinses. The ritual is complete.

He wipes a small section of the mirror and stares at his reflection. No emotion, just expectation. He runs a hand over his jaw, checking for the slightest hint of stubble.

Perfect. Still.

Then, a single drop of water escapes the fog at the top of the glass. It slides down the mirror, carving a jagged path through the mist—just enough to break the symmetry.

Thomas freezes. His eyes lock onto the trail of the drop.

CUT TO:

3 INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Thomas reaches for the electric razor on the shelf. He pauses, then raises his right hand, palm open—testing the air, or perhaps scratching a phantom itch near his temple.

He holds the pose.

In the mirror, his reflection moves—a half-beat late. A tiny, unnatural delay, like a glitch in a digital stream.

Thomas freezes. He frowns, his breath hitching.

He lowers his hand. This time, the reflection follows perfectly. Synced.

He lifts his left hand to his chest. The reflection mirrors him instantly. He exhales, a shaky, uneasy sound.

THOMAS
(muttering)
Coffee hasn’t kicked in yet.

He tries again—sharper, a test of reality. He snaps his right hand up to his ear. Quick. Deliberate.

The reflection lags. A visible hiccup. A skipped frame.

Thomas slowly lowers his hand, his heart thumping against his ribs. He stares into the mirror. His reflection stares back—calm, still, and fundamentally *wrong*.

He doesn’t move. Neither does the image.

The only sound is the faint, sterile buzz of the bathroom fan.

CUT TO:

4 INT. BATHROOM - MORNING (DAY 2)

Thomas shaves, his eyes strictly fixed on his jaw, avoiding the mirror’s gaze. Every stroke of the blade is careful. Contained.

He rinses his face, water dripping into the basin. He hesitates. Finally, he looks up.

In the mirror, his reflection blinks—half a second late. Just enough to be felt.

THOMAS
(firm; to himself)
Humidity. Old mirror. Refraction.
That's all.

He raises a hand, slowly. The reflection lags—starting late, ending a beat after him. A flicker. A slip in the fabric of the world.

He presses his fingertips against the glass. Cold. Tangible. Real.

THOMAS (V.O.)
The mind fills what it can't
explain. It smooths the tremor.
It's just a trick.

He forces a smile, a grimace of teeth and tension. The reflection smiles back—but it is slower, wider, and fundamentally *wrong*.

Thomas's own grin drops. The reflection's smile lingers for a fraction of a second longer before fading.

CUT TO:

5 INT. KITCHEN / OFFICE - MONTAGE (DAYS PASS)

Thomas lifts his mug, sips. The reflection in the window waits a beat, then mimics him. He slams the mug down.

Thomas nods to a coworker on a video call. As he finishes speaking, he glances at the darkened laptop screen. His reflection's mouth is still moving—finishing the sentence without him.

Silence. The reflection finally stops, a full second late, its face twisted in a lingering frown. Thomas slams the laptop shut.

6 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT (LATER THAT WEEK)

Thomas paces the small space. He is pale, his hands trembling. He stops abruptly in front of the mirror.

The lag is now two full seconds. A yawning chaps in reality.

THOMAS
(a ragged whisper)
Stay still.

He snaps his right arm up—lightning fast.

The reflection doesn't move. One second. Two.

Then—the mirrored arm snaps up, fist clenched.

Thomas staggers back, his breath catching in a dry throat.

THOMAS (V.O.)
It should be instant. Light. Physics. The only proof I exist is *now*. Not two seconds ago.

He stares. The reflection stares back—delayed. It's no longer him; it's a ghost of a moment passed.

THOMAS
(quiet, trembling)
You're not me. You're history.

He closes his eyes. Forces a breath. Opens them. The reflection opens its eyes two seconds later.

The silence stretches, heavy and suffocating. The hum of the light fixture grows into an unbearable roar. Thomas stands frozen, caught in the terrifying gap between the present... and his own echo.

CUT TO:

7 INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Thomas trembles, his breath rasping in the suffocating silence. The mirror begins to hum—a low, rhythmic vibration, like a mechanical heartbeat.

He steps forward. Hesitant. For the first time, his reflection remains motionless.

THOMAS
(softly; pleading)
Please... move. Just—move.

Nothing. The reflection stares back with cold detachment. A stranger in his own skin. Thomas waves his hand frantically. No response. He slaps his own face—the crack of skin on skin echoes. The reflection stays frozen.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
No, no, no—come on!

The lights flicker, buzzing. When they steady, the reflection's eyes begin to track him, though its body remains stone-still. The lag no longer makes sense. It isn't behind him anymore. It's ahead. Watching.

Thomas stumbles, slips, and hits the edge of the bathtub. His breath is erratic.

THOMAS (V.O.)
It isn't a reflection. It's a witness.

He crawls toward the door. He grabs the handle—it's jammed. Stuck. The mirror ripples—faintly, like a stone dropped into dark water. Then, it goes still. The reflection finally moves —but not to mimic. It leans forward, placing a palm flat against the glass from the other side.

A faint, warm handprint appears on Thomas's side of the glass. His own print.

THOMAS
(a terrified whisper)
You're inside me...

The lights flicker again. Now, there are *two* reflections. The first is Thomas: terrified, disheveled, broken. Behind him stands a darker version—calm, confident, wearing a faint, predatory smile.

THOMAS (V.O.)
He looked like me... before it all fell apart.

Thomas spins around. The bathroom is empty. Nothing there. He faces the mirror again. The darker version stands alone now, staring directly into Thomas's eyes. Thomas's real image is gone.

The lights cut out. Total darkness. In the silence, a faint, slow exhale. It doesn't belong to Thomas.

FADE OUT.

8 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Thomas stands before the mirror. Motionless. His eyes are bloodshot; his hands grip the porcelain sink so hard his knuckles are ghostly white. He hasn't slept in days.

The air hums—a low, oppressive electrical buzz. The mirror fogs, then clears on its own.

THOMAS (V.O.)
The pattern broke. No physics. No reflection. Just… decision.

In the mirror, the reflection moves first. It raises its left hand, rests an elbow on the shelf, looking thoughtful—almost casual. Thomas remains frozen. His arm stays dead at his side.

The reflection taps its chin—deliberate. It is not his tic. It is its own.

THOMAS
(a hoarse whisper)
No…

The reflection's lips curl into a thin, cold smile. Thomas trembles, his frantic breath fogging the glass. A beat. The reflection looks down at Thomas's hands, then back up. It acknowledges him as a separate entity.

Thomas stumbles back, crashing into the shower curtain. The plastic rings rattle like teeth. The reflection steps closer within the frame. It doesn't physically move, but its presence grows heavier, the head looming larger in the glass.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Stay back…

The reflection raises its right hand slowly. It clenches a fist—calm, deliberate, lethal. Thomas throws up his arms, cornered.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Stop! Don't—

The reflection mouths words—slow, silent: **Y - O - U - A - R - E - M - I - N - E.**

Thomas freezes. The meaning is clear. Final. He spins toward the door, grabs the iron towel hook—the screws tear free with a metallic shriek.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
You're not real!

He swings the iron hook—**CRASH!** But there is no shatter. The sound is dull, thick, like striking solid stone.

Thomas recoils. He opens his eyes. The mirror is untouched. Smooth. Perfect.

The reflection stands there—no smile now, only quiet pity. It slowly lowers its fist and shakes its head.

The iron hook slips from Thomas's hand. It clatters onto the tiles. The reflection's lag increases—five, six, seven seconds. Delay has become distance.

Thomas leans in, his face inches from the glass. He raises his hand—the reflection does not follow. He lowers it. The reflection raises its hand seconds later.

Its eyes... they are looking *ahead*.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
(quietly)
You're not behind me anymore… are you?

The reflection smiles—soft, confident, knowing.

A flicker of light. The bulb buzzes, then **POPS**. Darkness. When the light flickers back to life—

Thomas is gone. The bathroom is empty. Only the reflection remains in the mirror. It breathes. Slow. Steady. Then, it turns its head and looks—directly into the lens.

FADE OUT.